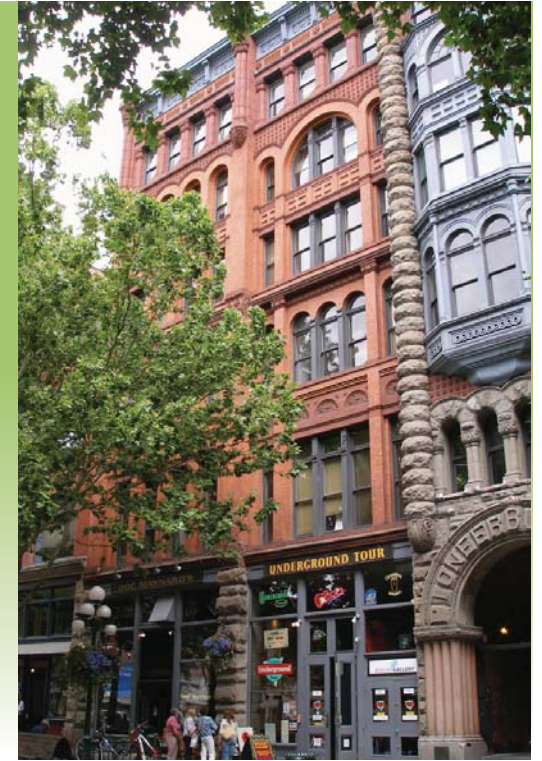


LIVABLE SOUTH DOWNTOWN PLANNING STUDY

EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS December 2009



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Historic photos courtesy Seattle Municipal Archives



December 2009

Dear Friends:

I am pleased to present Livable South Downtown – Executive Recommendations. This report accompanies proposed land use legislation to encourage investment and enhance neighborhood character, helping to implement neighborhood plans. City Council will consider this legislation in 2010.

South Downtown is home to Seattle's earliest history, a gateway to the Pacific Rim, a unique blending of diverse cultures and ingenuity, a transportation hub and a destination for regional entertainment. The actions described within this report acknowledge the area's regional and historic context, and describe directions for the future as South Downtown neighborhoods evolve over time.

The report represents the culmination of numerous conversations with individuals and organizations over the past four years. It has been a pleasure working with so many community members who care so deeply about the future of South Downtown.

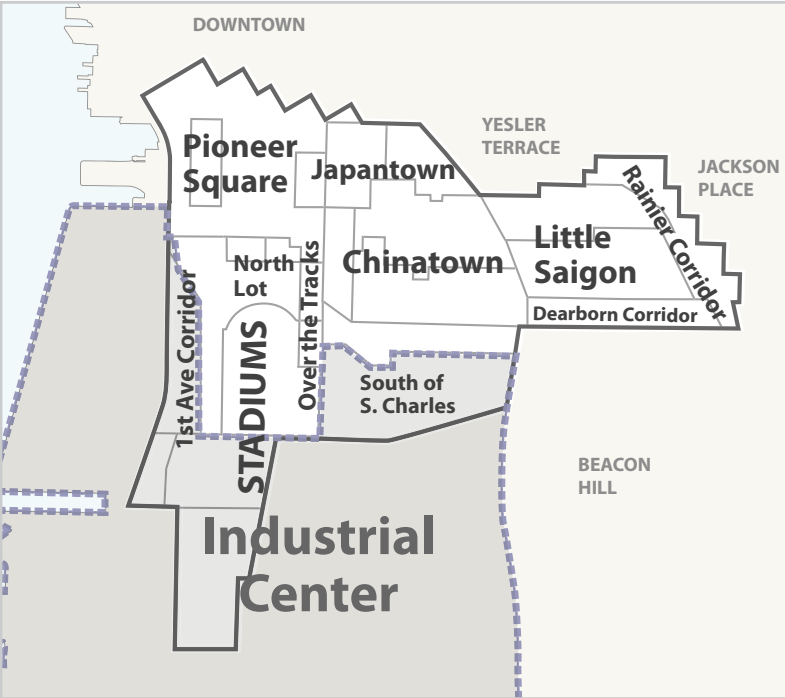
The City of Seattle continues to work with South Downtown neighborhoods to address neighborhood needs and citywide goals through a diversity of actions. Many of these actions are reflected in the Related Initiatives chapter of this report. Others, such as urban design and economic development strategies, are outlined in the materials found on the project web site.

I invite you to join in the ongoing dialogue about the future of South Downtown as the City Council considers recommendations for changes to land use requirements for this unique and fascinating area of our city.

Sincerely,

GREG NICKELS
Mayor of Seattle





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Pioneer Square (foreground), Chinatown/ID (left), Union Station and King Street Station (center, center-right respectively), circa 1920s

A SHORT HISTORY OF SOUTH DOWNTOWN

South Downtown has been shaped by its location at the crossroads of industry, culture and the natural environment. Here, Seattle celebrates its earliest history, first as the location of tribal villages along rich tidelands of Elliott Bay and the Duwamish River, and later as a pioneer town with a booming timber industry. As South Downtown developed in the early 19th century, it soon became a center for Seattle's earliest trade within the region and throughout the world. Chinese and Japanese communities flourished in the late 19th century as Asian workers helped build Seattle's growing industrial base and the nation's rail system.

By the early 20th century, many Filipino people worked in fishing trades on a seasonal basis, and Jackson Street near 12th Ave. South began to develop as a thriving African American cultural scene marked by after-hours jazz clubs. More recently, Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian entrepreneurs established a strong presence east of Interstate 5, where a vibrant business community is thriving today.

In the mid-20th century, South Downtown was bisected by Interstate 5, and was also affected by the State Route 99 Alaskan Way Viaduct's construction. The Kingdome was constructed from 1972-1976, introducing Seattle to its first regional sports venue and inspiring the establishment of the Pioneer Square and International District Special Review District in response to potential stadium impacts. This was followed by demolition of the Kingdome in 2000 and the construction of Safeco Field, Qwest Field and the associated exhibition center, all bringing new visitors to the area.

Over the past several decades, the economic fortunes of South Downtown have risen and fallen with the city's growth and employment trends. In recent decades, land values and private investment in South Downtown have at times stagnated while other areas of Downtown have experienced more growth and change. The resultant affordable cost of rental space close to Downtown provided an ideal location for numerous small businesses, non-profit organizations, art galleries and organizations, and human service operations.

In the late 1990s, the Pioneer Square and Chinatown/International District neighborhoods developed neighborhood plans that called for more residents, opportunities for employment, investments in public safety, and services that provide a balance between regional uses and neighborhood needs. In early 2004, several property owners identified future development opportunities in South Downtown that could potentially meet the intent of the neighborhood plans and Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

In response to neighborhood and community interest in future development, the Mayor asked the Department of Planning and Development to begin evaluating potential land use actions to support re-investment in South Downtown and improve the "livability" of the area. Thus, the Livable South Downtown Project commenced in 2005.



Pioneer Square Totem Pole, 1899

LIVABLE SOUTH DOWNTOWN PLANNING STUDY

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Livable South Downtown Planning Study has proposed City land use actions to create a more livable community by encouraging appropriate residential and jobs-related development in the area. Recommendations in this report will help to focus the vision for a cohesive community made of distinct neighborhoods, where people can comfortably and safely live, work and play.

Goals for the Livable South Downtown Planning Study include:

- Stimulate housing and jobs through changes to land use regulations;
- Respect neighborhood plans and neighborhood character, including historic resources;
- Promote an integrated mix of uses;
- Support connections between neighborhoods;
- Encourage economic vitality and environmental sustainability; and
- Accommodate regional services and ensure they align with the goals of the local community.

Specific objectives to accomplish through the project include:

- Evaluate development opportunities and constraints, particularly with regard to housing and jobs;
- Identify desired development character;
- Recommend and implement City land use action to support emerging residential/employment communities; and
- Recommend public and private investments that will contribute to a well-balanced community in South Downtown.

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY DIALOGUE

The Department of Planning and Development (DPD) is grateful to each member of the South Downtown community who has taken time to analyze, provide commentary and consult with staff on the many complex issues that arise in this area of the city. The Livable South Downtown Planning Study has been informed by a rich dialogue with the community including the following:

- Review of relevant neighborhood plans with special attention to specific recommendations that inform the Livable South Downtown Planning Study;
- Meetings with community groups and community planners throughout Pioneer Square, Chinatown/International District, including Little Saigon and the industrially-zoned areas;
- Meetings with the Pioneer Square Preservation Board and the Chinatown/International District Special Review Board;
- Review and commentary by the Vision 2030 Chinatown/International District community stakeholders group;
- Interviews with individuals throughout the community;
- Meetings with Seattle City Councilmembers and other elected leaders;
- Meetings with the industrial community, Port of Seattle officials, rail representatives, stadium representatives and property owners;
- Public open house events;
- Public hearings and meetings associated with the South Downtown EIS;
- Consultation with City departments that play a role in South Downtown's development.
- Meetings and consultation with the Seattle Planning Commission; and
- Consultation with the Livable South Downtown Advisory Group. Notes from the Advisory Group meetings can be found online at: www.seattle.gov/dpd/Planning/SouthDowntown/. A list of advisory group members can be found at the beginning of this report.

PROJECT MILESTONES

Land Use Recommendations

Advisory Group Process	From 2005 through 2007, an advisory group comprised of 25 stakeholders from the South Downtown community was convened to explore a range of issues including: community character, land use goals, transportation, urban design, sustainable forms of development and future zoning options.
Public Meetings	September 2005, Open House at the International District/ Chinatown Community Center. March 2006, Open House at City Hall.
Background Report	Published January 2006.
Phase I Staff Report	Phase I Staff Report released in March, 2006. The report identified preliminary land use recommendations.
Draft Land Use Recommendations	May 2008. Formal public commentary concluded in Summer 2008. A public open house took place on June 3, 2008.
Final Proposal to City Council	A final package of recommended land use changes released December 2009.
City Council Deliberation	The City Council will conduct public hearings. The proposal may be amended by Council Members prior to a final vote.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Scoping Process	Formal scoping comment period for the Draft EIS was initiated on May 15 and concluded on June 15, 2006. A draft Scope was published in August 2006. A final EIS scope was published in November 2006.
EIS Scoping Public Meeting	On June 1, 2006 at the Klondike Goldrush Museum in Pioneer Square, DPD held a formal EIS scoping meeting.
Studies	Numerous studies were conducted to support the Environmental Impact Statement and provide overall analysis for the Livable South Downtown Planning Study including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive transportation analysis; ▪ Historic and cultural resources inventory; ▪ Housing Inventory; ▪ Assessment of potential small business impacts in Chinatown/ I.D./Little Saigon; ▪ Urban design and streetscape analyses of Little Saigon, Chinatown and Pioneer Square; ▪ Assessment of real estate economic conditions; ▪ Noise impacts analysis; and ▪ Potential earthquake losses modeling study.
Draft EIS	The Draft EIS document was released on November 1, 2007.
Public Commentary, Public Hearing	On December 5, 2007 at City Hall, a Draft EIS public hearing was held. The public comment period ended on December 17, 2007. Over 120 pages of public commentary were received.
Final EIS	The Final EIS was published in May 2008.